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SUMMER 2013

WWW.CMA.ARMY.MIL

CMA continues along realignment path

CMA's leadership team of Don Barclay and Jeffrey Harris updated Mr. Carmen Spencer, Joint Program Executive Officer – Chemical and Biological Defense (JPEO-CBD), in late June on the ongoing path forward to reshape CMA and align the acquisition elements under a new Joint Project Manager in the JPEO-CBD.

The reshape plan was designed to align the acquisition program, CMA's former Chemical Warfare Elimination mission, under an acquisition lead, which rests with the JPEO-CBD. This realignment combines the capabilities of CMA's Project Manager for Chemical Stockpile Elimination (PMCSE) and CMA's Non-Stockpile Chemical Materiel Project (NSCMP) into a Joint Project Manager – Elimination (JPM-E), and transfers that mission under JPEO-CBD's joint umbrella of similar chemical and biological defense programs. This move preserves the knowledge base acquired and developed under CMA's 30+ years of chemical materiel destruction experience.

The remaining elements of CMA – the storage, protection and treaty compliance missions—remain under a restructured CMA, one that remains a subordinate command of the U.S. Army Materiel Command, CMA's current higher headquarters.

The first major milestones of the reshape effort were to transfer Operational Control (OpCon) for the new JPM-E over to JPEO-CBD and the stand-up of the restructured CMA. This officially occurred on 5 Aug 2013. The long-range goal is to transfer Command and Control of the JPM-E to the JPEO CBD by 1 Oct 2014 and to have a "right-sized" CMA in place for FY15. Functional area representatives from CMA and the JPEO are currently working the plans for the transfer and CMA leadership will soon begin a requirements review to help define the future streamlined CMA HQ. All goals are currently on track.

Tooele Army Depot takes the reins

On July 11, 2013 — exactly 70 years after the first flag was raised at Deseret Chemical Depot (DCD) — Army officials conducted a special ceremony to case the depot's colors, officially marking the end of DCD and transferring the depot property and structures back to Tooele Army Depot (TEAD).

"What employees have accomplished here in the last 70 years is nothing short of amazing," said Brig. Gen. Kristin French, Commanding General, Joint Munitions Command. "You've made a huge contribution to the attainment of our commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention Treaty and this is just one lasting legacy," remarked French.



Deseret Chemical Depot's last Commander, Col. Mark B. Pomeroy (left) and Noncommissioned Officer Master Sgt Eric Ryals (right) case the depot's colors, signifying the end of the depot's mission and formally marking the closure of DCD. The installation has been reassigned to Tooele Army Depot (TEAD) and is once again known as TEAD South Area.



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For nearly 70 years DCD safely stored the Nation's single-largest chemical weapons stockpile. Destruction of the entire stockpile began in 1996 at the Tooele Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (TOCDF) and was safely completed on January 21, 2012.

"For over 70 years, this depot had one enduring mission — to safely store this stockpile," said DCD's last Commander, Col. Mark B. Pomeroy as he addressed the crowd. "With the casing of our colors today, I'm proud to say that this mission is now complete."

Pomeroy reflected on the contributions of the Chemical Agent Munitions Disposal System (CAMDS), which began operations at DCD in 1979. CAMDS led the way as they developed and tested chemical destruction technologies that have been used here and at other sites throughout the country.

In preparation for the depot to be handed back to TEAD, Pomeroy and former TEAD Commander Col. Chris Mohan worked towards a seamless transition. As DCD operations ramped down, TEAD began ramping up so that TEAD would be fully operational when the depot was transferred.

Although DCD has been formally closed and the former workers have moved onto their next venture, the installation will live on with a new mission centered on conventional ammunition with TEAD at the reins.

Col. Roger L. McCreery, who assumed command of TEAD only one day prior to the depot transfer, will now manage both TEAD North and South areas.

"Col. McCreery, I wish you the very best in command and I officially hand you this big key," Pomeroy said in conclusion as he handed the oversized ceremonial key to McCreery, officially marking the transfer of the depot.

Chemical Materials Activity holds frocking ceremony

A pair of eagles perches atop the shoulders of the US Army Chemical Materials Activity (CMA) Military Deputy Director, who was frocked in the rank of Colonel in a ceremony here, July 1.

The ceremony, presided over by LTG Thomas Spoehr, Director, Program Analysis and Evaluation, Army G-8, recognized Lt. Col. (P) Wittig's October 2012 nomination to his new rank.

With the frocking comes a new position for Wittig who only received his designation as Military Deputy Director of CMA on June 27. In remarks during the ceremony, Spoehr remarked on Wittig's storied Army career; reminding those in attendance of the asset CMA is receiving in Wittig's knowledge and experience.





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Wittig thanked Spoehr for his support and said he and his family have had a fortunate 27 year career because of leaders, like Spoehr, guiding him along the way. Looking back on his career, Wittig shared anecdotes of his time as an enlisted man and also paused to thank his wife, Laura, for her continued support in his desire to remain a Soldier.

"I couldn't have done it without you," said Wittig to Laura, "actually, no, I wouldn't want to have done it without you," he concluded solemnly.

Frocking, outlined in Army Regulation 600-8-29 (Officer Promotions), is a process that allows officers serving in duty positions officially designated for a higher grade to wear the insignia of that grade so that their grade title is commensurate with the position.

During his career Wittig has served in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal; Defense Meritorious Service Medal; Meritorious Service Medal (3rd OLC); Joint Service Commendation Medal; Army Commendation Medal (8th OLC); Joint Service Achievement Medal (1st OLC); Army Achievement Medal (2nd OLC); Joint Meritorious Unit Award (2nd OLC); Army Good Conduct Medal; Iraq Campaign Medal; Global War on Terrorism – Expeditionary and Service Medal; NCO Professional Development Ribbon; Overseas Service Ribbon (4th); Parachutist Badge, Air Assault Badge, and Combat Action Badge.

Army chemical weapons storage workers reach safety milestones

Two Army organizations responsible for the safe storage and handling of stockpiled chemical weapons achieved one-year recordable injury rates of zero in June. Deseret Chemical Depot (DCD), located in Utah, and Blue Grass Chemical Activity (BGCA), located at Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky, are both subordinate units of the U.S. Army Chemical Materials Activity (CMA), headquartered at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration defines a recordable injury as any work-related injury that requires treatment above first aid; is diagnosed as significant by a licensed health care professional; or that results in loss of consciousness, death, days away from work, restricted work, or transfer to another job. The recordable injury rate (RIR) is a 12-month rolling average among all the organization's government employees.

Deseret Chemical Depot is a former CMA installation that once stored the nation's largest and most diverse chemical weapons stockpile. That stockpile was safely eliminated in January 2012 at the Tooele Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (TOCDF), a chemical agent incineration facility located on the installation. After the safe elimination of the chemical weapons stockpile, the depot's primary missions were the handling and monitoring of hazardous and agent-contaminated waste and preparation for the turnover of the installation to the nearby Tooele Army Depot (TEAD) in July 2013.



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The depot workforce steadily decreased in size, with about 400 employees prior to stockpile elimination; 250 in June 2012; 130 in March 2013; and 30 on July 11, 2013, when the depot was transferred from CMA to TEAD.

During the 12-month period in which the zero RIR was achieved, DCD employees completed the delivery of thousands of barrels of chemical agent-contaminated waste materials from storage structures to the Drum Ventilation System Sorting Room located in the storage area. There, workers monitored, sorted, and categorized the waste for disposal. The waste was generated over the course of 70 years of chemical weapons storage and disposal at DCD.

With CMA's chemical weapons disposal mission at DCD complete, depot employees were handed the task to clean and monitor all former chemical storage structures to ensure compliance with the depot's Resource Conservation and Recovery Act permits. Employees cleaned and monitored 208 storage igloos and 34 warehouses that had formerly housed chemical agents, according to DCD Commander Col. Mark Pomeroy.

During the same period, employees were required to prepare all of the depot's equipment for turn in. Every piece of equipment, from computers to forklifts to modular trailers, was inspected and inventoried.

"These activities were a significant change from the work we'd been doing prior to stockpile elimination and, as we know, with change comes added risk," Pomeroy said. "We started closure activities about two years ago, and we invested early-on in training on things like lifting and moving equipment."

Pomeroy said DCD experienced an initial increase in its RIR as it transitioned from chemical weapons storage operations to closure operations, but said the safety culture embraced by DCD employees enabled them to identify new risks and react quickly.

"We learned some things very quickly, like putting folks in personal protective equipment (PPE) even when moving simple things like pallets because there are preservatives in the wood that can cause skin irritation," Pomeroy said. "We learned that just as we needed PPE for chemical operations, we needed PPE for standard operations, so we started putting our folks in jumpsuits."

Pomeroy said that as the months rolled by without a recordable injury, employees began to see that the goal of achieving a zero RIR was within reach.

"When you have a goal like that in front of you, it really brings safety to mind in everything that you do," Pomeroy said. "We emphasized to the workforce that nothing we were doing was worth the risk of life or limb. It was just a continual focus on safety and never letting our guard down."

While the DCD employees have spent the last year preparing for closure following completion of the stockpile destruction mission there, the 121 employees at Blue Grass Chemical Activity have been storing and managing a chemical weapons stockpile comprised of 523 tons of weaponized chemical agent. BGCA employees are responsible for the safe and secure storage of one of the nation's two remaining chemical weapons stockpiles, which are scheduled for destruction under the DoD's Assembled Chemical Weapons



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Alternatives (ACWA) Program. Among the chemical weapons in the custody of BGCA are the nation's last remaining stockpiled nerve agents.

According to BGCA Commander Lt. Col. Christopher Grice, employees are charged with a myriad of tasks from conducting chemical operations to performing in-house maintenance on electronics and equipment. "On any given day, I have employees inside igloos inspecting the condition of munitions, the condition of the wooden pallets that the munitions rest on, and the condition of the storage magazines themselves," Grice said. "They're out there in the storage area in PPE, dealing with heat stress, reduced vision, and reduced manual dexterity. They're operating forklifts and other heavy equipment."

BGCA employees routinely monitor the chemical storage igloos using Real Time Analytical Platforms – vehicles equipped with chemical agent monitoring equipment – to check for leaking munitions. When required, BGCA employees conduct leaker isolation and overpack operations inside the storage igloos.

Additionally, the activity operates its own warehouse and maintenance facility where PPE is cleaned, inspected, and repaired. The activity also maintains its own self-contained breathing apparatus.

The Blue Grass stockpile will be destroyed by ACWA's Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant, which is currently under construction. BGCA employees will perform many tasks in support of the destruction effort, and training on unique equipment to be used for M55 rocket separation operations is now underway. Likewise, facilities in the chemical weapons storage area are being upgraded to prepare for increased use.

"There's a lot of construction ongoing in the BGCA area of operations," Grice said. "It's a changing environment, and that brings an element of risk." Mitigating that risk and safely executing the many tasks necessary to the unit's mission can only be accomplished by a professional workforce, according to Grice. "If the workforce isn't willing to embrace safety, then we won't safely complete our mission," he said.

Activity Safety Officer Scott Wilson agreed. "Safety is a continuous process," he said. "We must have employee buy-in to make our operating culture a safety culture. We're fortunate in that we have a workforce of experienced professionals who look out for each other. They take safety seriously."

According to Wilson, employees are full partners with leadership in the safety process. An employee safety committee meets regularly to discuss employee safety concerns and elevate issues and recommendations to leadership.

Additionally, safety suggestion boxes have been placed at various locations in the activity operations area, and Wilson said the boxes generate excellent suggestions that are individually logged and tracked.

"When folks see their safety suggestions being implemented they become invested in the safety process," Wilson said. "Leadership also does a great job of seeking out and recognizing safety excellence among our workforce."



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Both Pomeroy and Grice noted that cross-pollination of safety ideas among various CMA elements was one of the factors that enabled their workforces to excel.

"We've had the opportunity to follow behind seven very successful CMA chemical weapons storage sites," Grice said. "We've had the opportunity to learn from their successes and from their mistakes."

That cross-pollination of the CMA safety culture is something that the CMA headquarters safety staff has worked to build into the safety program, according to CMA Safety Manager Keith Davidson. "We have a headquarters safety manager assigned to each site, and we've worked to foster an environment of cross-site integration," Davidson said. "Our safety managers and safety engineers conduct site safety evaluations and assistance visits on a regular basis, and we share lessons learned across all the sites during monthly safety discussions."

Alan Cushen, CMA's Chief of Occupational Health and Safety, noted that this accomplishment is the result of leadership emphasis, from the Director of CMA to the first line supervisor. "Four years ago, the Director of CMA challenged the organization to achieve an RIR of zero," Cushen said. "It was a stretch goal, but if we didn't set the goal, we knew we'd never get there. The emphasis was there from the top to the bottom." "This isn't something the headquarters safety office did," Cushen continued. "This is something the employees at DCD and BGCA did. This is what happens when employees take individual ownership of the safety program. It was a true team effort."

The result of that effort is a safety record that more closely resembles the risks associated with working in the financial sector than the hazardous waste disposal industry.

"Typically, you find very low RIRs in white-collar workplaces, like the financial sector," Davidson said. "The tasks our workforce performs compare most closely to hazardous waste disposal, which has an industry-wide RIR of 3.6."

Cushen said the Army can learn a lot about teamwork from the employees at DCD and BGCA. "No one thing caused this, no one person accomplished this," he said. "It was team effort, task by task, day by day, and it's a great leadership success from top to bottom."



A Blue Grass Chemical Activity toxic material handler conducts a magazine inspection to identify any degradation to the safety and integrity of the pallets, chemical munitions or the earth covered storage magazine.



Deseret Chemical Depot workers Frank DeHerrera and Scott Bevan pressure wash one of the 208 igloos at Deseret. Depot workers ensured all igloos were free of agent contamination prior to transfer to Tooele Army Depot.